

### Remarks

With respect to the Applicant's claim of priority, we respectfully submit that such claim is proper. First, the Applicant notes that the base priority document is FR 99-04668, filed April 14, 1999. The Official Action dated October 3, 2002 stating that the priority application has a filing date in France of April 14, 2000 is incorrect. In any event, the Applicant subsequently filed a PCT application on April 14, 2000 designating the U.S., among others. Then, within the appropriate 30-month time period, the Applicant filed this Application on October 12, 2001 as a continuation application under 35 U.S.C. §111. As a consequence of the above sequence of events, the Applicant respectfully submits that the claim of priority is proper and that appropriate priority should be accorded to this Application. Confirmation is respectfully requested.

The Applicant notes with appreciation the Examiner's helpful comments concerning Claims 4 and 5, on the one hand, and Claims 9 and 10, on the other hand, with respect to 37 C.F.R. §1.75. Claims 9 and 10 have accordingly been canceled.

Claim 1 has been amended for clarification purposes and, in so doing, reference to "image base" has been deleted. Withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §112 rejection of Claim 1 is accordingly respectfully requested. Claim 5 has been amended to remove reference to "reproduction bank". Withdrawal of that §112 rejection is also respectfully requested. The rejection of Claim 10 is now moot in view of its cancellation. With respect to Claim 4, the Applicant agrees with the Examiner's interpretation, thereby rendering it definite.

Turning now to the merits, the Applicant has taken a large step forward in the art by providing a medical imaging system comprising an acquisition and treatment station ("acquisition workstation") of a digital image and a diagnostic station ("expert station"). Important aspects of the invention as set forth in the solicited claims include:

1) Both stations are synchronized. The expert workstation considers the 3D matrix resulting from the echographic acquisition by the acquisition workstation and sets up any 2D sectional plan with a virtual probe.

2) Both stations communicate with each other. The expert workstation transmits only control data to the acquisition workstation. The acquisition workstation and the expert workstation have the same databases. The control data allows each workstation to contain the echographic image (2D plans) decided by the expert to reduce the data flow between both of the stations.

The Applicant respectfully submits that the invention as recited in the amended claims fully distinguishes over Collet-Billon and Zulauf. Collet-Billon discloses an ultrasonic echography system permitting: acquisition and construction of a 3D echography image in voxels in a memory with a first workstation (“acquisition workstation”); and then restitution of the digital image with a sensor, the sensor being moved on a dummy, to constitute a second workstation (“restitution workstation”).

The system of Collet-Billon comprises: a first workstation (“acquisition workstation”) (4, 14, 34) connected to an echograph (1, 31) and an electronic acquisition assembly (9, 39), and comprising: means for acquisition of an echographic image and setting up from echographic sectional planes a digital image formed by a three-dimensional matrix (Column 5, lines 16 —24), and means for transmitting the digital image (3, 43),

a second workstation (“restitution workstation”) comprising: a sensor (22, 52) and means for referencing positions on a dummy (26, 56), echographic display means (6, 16, 36), means for performing a virtual echographic examination of digital image with the sensor to select a pre-recorded two-dimensional sectional plan from the digital image.

However, Collet-Billon does not disclose, teach or suggest that the system comprises means

for return expert assessment combining videoconference ability, and means for transmitting selected control data between the first workstation and the second workstation, the control data allowing for the selection on each workstation of the sectional plan to be visualized as claimed herein. Moreover, Collet-Billon does not disclose, teach or suggest means for performing a virtual echography examination of digital image to select any 2D sectional plan in the digital image. In sharp contrast, Collet-Billon discloses a virtual examination of digital image allowing only visualization of some pre-recorded 2D sectional planes. The Applicant accordingly respectfully requests withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection based on Collet-Billon.

The Applicant respectfully submits that the amended claims are also patentable over Zulauf. Zulauf discloses a method and a system for performing telefluoroscopy, generating video images of sufficient clarity and detail to enable a radiologist at a site remote (“diagnostic workstation” or “expert workstation”) from the fluoroscopy examining site (“examining workstation”/“acquisition workstation”) to render a medically accurate diagnosis from the displayed video image.

As helpfully noted by the Examiner at page 5, lines 7 – 9 in the Official Action, Zulauf teaches a person skilled in the art, armed with the knowledge of Collet-Billon, means for return assessment combining videoconference ability from a diagnostic workstation to an examining workstation.

However, Zulauf does not disclose, teach or suggest means for transmitting between an examining workstation and a diagnostic workstation control data allowing for the selection on each workstation the sectional plan to be visualized, or means for performing a virtual echographic examination of the digital image to select any 2D sectional plan from the digital image. In sharp contrast, Zulauf discloses a system in which the images to be diagnosed are generated by a radiologic professional at the examining workstation, the images being transmitted to the diagnostic

workstation so that a radiologist can view and interpret the results (Column 12, line 66 to Column 3, line 49 – "...a remote viewing and interpretation location", "...so that the radiologist staffing the remote site can selectively view and interpret the results of fluoroscopic, radiologic, or ultrasonographic examinations...").

As a consequence, it is clear that the sectional planes of an image are first selected by the examining workstation. The direct manipulation of images from the examining workstation by the radiologist is not disclosed, taught or suggested in Zulauf. Therefore, the characteristics regarding the selection of a particular plan of an image and/or the transmission of control data allowing to select on each workstation the sectional plan of the image to visualize are not taught nor suggested in Zulauf. The Applicant accordingly respectfully submits that the claims are patentable over Zulauf and respectfully requests withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection of the claims based on Zulauf.

In light of the foregoing, we respectfully submit that the entire Application is now in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



T. Daniel Christenbury  
Reg. No. 31,750

TDC:lh  
(215) 656-3300